

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2020

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We write on behalf of the approximately 13,000 bodegas, ethnic grocery stores, and other small independent supermarkets in New York City, as well as the many millions of families who rely on them. We strongly request that the next stimulus package address the millions of Americans who were food insecure before COVID-19, and the millions who will be driven into hunger because of it.

Small grocers provide a unique access point to ensure that those who are food insecure can purchase healthy foods and fresh produce. While major grocery chains are struggling to keep up with panic buying of toilet paper, paper towels, and other staples, New Yorkers are turning to their community stores for these critical supplies.

We ask that funding be included in the next stimulus package to support:

- Grants to directed toward the purchase of refrigeration units to store fresh produce and to offset the increase in utility costs as a result of refrigeration;
- The facilitation of links between farms in rural areas and small grocers in order to create new points of sale for local meat, produce, and dairy. This would not only address food insecurity in urban districts, but would also support farmers who are so desperately in need of relief as the restaurants that they would normally sell have temporarily or permanently closed;
- Authorization for a national Healthy Bodega Campaign, based on New York City's successful program, which aims to boost the availability of and demand for healthy foods in neighborhoods with the highest rates of poverty and chronic diseases;
- Increased funding for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to address the food needs of more than 40 million food insecure Americans;
- Support hazard pay for frontline grocery store employees;
- Exemption of wages earned by workers in the grocery industry and their suppliers from 2020 federal income tax;
- Ensure that the stimulus checks provided to Americans with Social Security numbers are retroactively provided to people with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITIN); and

- Unemployment Insurance for those who qualify for it regardless of citizenship status.

Community grocery stores are a lifeline to their neighborhoods, who cater to specific cultural food preferences. As such, we urge you to help strengthen this critical community asset in the next relief package.

Sincerely,



Grace Meng
Member of Congress

/s/ Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/ Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

/s/ Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

/s/ Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

/s/ Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

/s/ Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress

/s/ José E. Serrano
Member of Congress

/s/ Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

/s/ Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

/s/ Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

/s/ Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress